

# Circuit

A monthly employee publication of the Bonneville Power Administration

## Corporate group gives top service

Three work sections with more than 50 employees used to handle disbursements, payroll and travel at BPA. That was before the mid 1990s when the major streamlining efforts began. In the years since, BPA combined those groups into one. And the group cut its cumulative number by more than half.

Just over five years ago, BPA's travel group had 20 employees, payroll had 12 and disbursements had 18. Today, 23 people in one group handle all the chores of those former groups.

Charlotte Scott is a former travel employee who now works in the new disbursement group. She says that six people today do the highly specialized payroll work. The other 16 staff handle travel and pay all of BPA's bills.

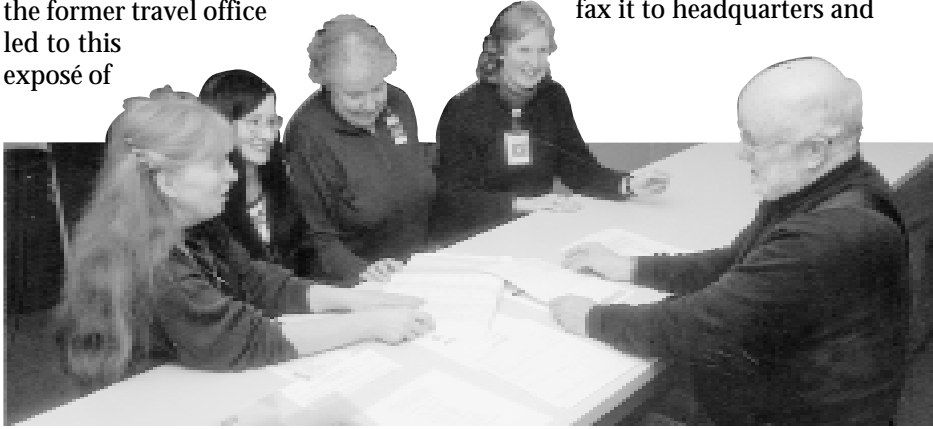
The three former groups were located in financial operations. The new disbursement operations group is in the Corporate business line. Besides the staffing cuts, Scott says, disbursement did many other things to help trim costs. Some efforts that the former groups began made the staff and other cost cuts possible.

The groups simplified their forms and processes. Travel arranged for direct billing with many hotels and motels. Groups streamlined steps for employees to get reimbursed for their work expenses. And computers helped automate more of the work.

Employees can now take care of most of their travel and financial needs by e-mail or over the phone. Still, payroll forms need signatures so disbursement keeps its headquarters service center open. Folks can walk into the second floor center to take care of other finance or travel matters as well.

While the combined group has cut costs and workforce numbers, it hasn't cut service. "Customer service is the most important thing to all of us," Scott says. "Inside or out, we try to give the same service," she says.

The proof of that service comes from the high marks the group gets from BPA workers and other groups. A recent e-mail that praised the former travel office led to this exposé of



Corporate disbursement combines the former travel, payroll and disbursements offices into one work group since BPA's major reorganization of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The group's customer service center offers one-stop service for employees who can also use e-mail, electronic forms or the telephone for travel and some other paperwork. (Left to right) Charlotte Scott, Phyllis Wells, Bonnie Smith, and Suzanne Smith are ready to help Forrest Meeks with any personal financial questions he has.

Photo by Jack Odgaard

the efficient behind-the-scenes support group.

Chief Operating Officer Steve Hickok got the e-mail from Larry King, customer account executive at Burley, Idaho. Hickok replied to King and sent a copy to the *Circuit*. Here's what King had to say.

"Yesterday, it hit me that sending in travel claims and being reimbursed for travel expenses has become as routine as breathing. I remembered back about six years and thought about the difficulty we had obtaining travel advances and the problems with the BPA credit card. We had long delays between submitting travel claims and getting reimbursed. It was a general pain in the neck just to deal with the travel office.

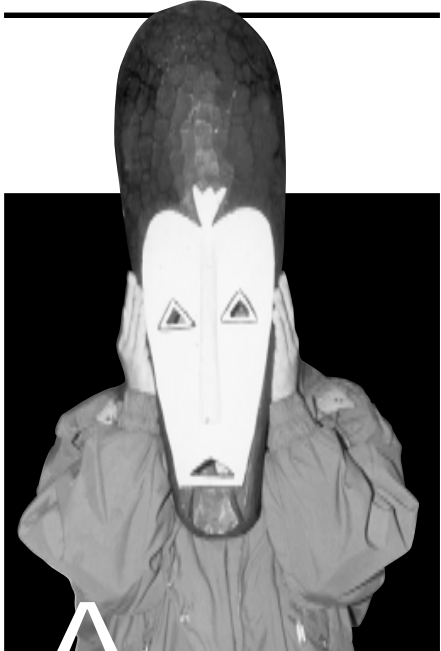
"But none of that is valid now. Today I sign a claim and fax it to Spokane to be signed by any one of a number of individuals. They fax it to headquarters and

usually within 48 hours – typically less time – I get an e-mail saying I should expect deposit into my account within two days.

"I don't recall an instance in the last several years when I have not received a timely payment or had to pay any travel costs out of my personal account.

"We pride ourselves in the Power Business Line for making a significant transition. We went from a stodgy bureaucratic response to customer need, to a team focused on response to customers. I think "the Travel Office" made greater changes.

*Continued on page 2*



An employee checks the fit of an African mask from a Ross Complex display in February. See page 7 for more about events during Black History Month and the extensive exhibits at Ross.

Photo by Jack Odgaard

"I need engineers," says Alan Courts, vice president for engineering and technical services, when asked why he's standing his ground in front of the BPA recruiting booth. A sea of college students ebbs and flows around him. Some stop to ask questions or offer a resumé.

Courts was part of a recruiting team assembled for the Minority Career Fair for Business, Engineering, Liberal Arts and Sciences on Jan. 26. The fair was held at the University of Washington in Seattle and drew hundreds of college students, most in their last year of undergraduate study.

Joining Courts at the fair were Sanford Menashe, John Brank, Terry Klinefelter and Pat Alvarez. All the members of BPA's recruiting team wore denim shirts that sported BPA's logo.

Klinefelter and Alvarez are BPA's only two full-time recruiters. Together they assemble recruiting teams for some 26 career fairs BPA attends annu-

## BPA beefs up recruiting efforts

ally along the West Coast. Which fairs and team members depend on the positions BPA seeks to fill.

"Our recruiting program is well underway after being quiet for several years," says Alvarez. She took on a full-time recruiting role in September 1998. She says the ad hoc recruiting teams have been successful for the fairs. "But we also need to develop more in-depth relationships on campuses, with instructors and deans," she says.

BPA is looking for employees who might like to represent the agency to help develop those contacts. Members of the recruiting teams will be trained before they hit the streets.

"Recruiting is exciting work," Alvarez says.

"Talking about BPA and meeting students, journeymen, and others who can help us attain our goals really keeps me enthused."

While it can be stimulating and fun work as well, the recruiting business is serious stuff. BPA isn't the only outfit in desperate need of specific skills. So the agency has to find ways to compete with other firms who want the same qualified people.

Yet, even with the competition, recruiters have more supportive relationships than one might think. Klinefelter explains: "We 'network' with recruiters from other companies. We create name recognition for BPA and we share recruiting tips."

Besides the college recruiting for General Service (GS) entry-level positions, Alvarez is working on another source for people. She's helping the Technical Training Center build relationships with trade schools to fill apprentice positions. Filling these positions from schools is somewhat easy compared to filling journeyman positions, she says. "There is no readily available source for the experienced employees."

To help meet these needs, BPA is turning to the Internet. "The Internet as a recruiting tool is something brand new for BPA," says Klinefelter. BPA is currently running a pilot program with energyjobs.com, and may subscribe to its service if the pilot is successful.

And BPA is now posting its vacancy announcements on another Web site – energyinfosource.com. So the agency has gone national, to find talented folks who are looking to relocate in the Northwest.

**Kyra Stewart coordinates BPA community relations in Seattle**

### Inside the Circuit

- 2-3 HPO perspective
- 3 Why is BPA recruiting?
- 4-5 BPA's big band swings
- 6 Foxes have historic home
- 7 Dittmer gets SWAT-ed
- 7 Black History Month at BPA
- 8 Earth Day gets energy



Hundreds of students visited BPA's booth at the University of Washington career fair for minority students in January. BPA recruiters and volunteers in blue denim shirts with BPA logos answered questions and handed out brochures. They were (left to right, facing right or forward): John Brank, Alan Courts, Pat Alvarez, Terry Klinefelter and Sanford Menashe.

Photos by Kyra Stewart

